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7AM-INTELLIGENCE

BY WILLIAM SCALLY

WASHINGTON, SEPT 3, REUTER - THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES JUDICIARY COMMITTEE TODAY APPROVED A BILL WHICH WOULD MAKE IT A CRIME TO REVEAL THE IDENTITY OF U.S. UNDERCOVER INTELLIGENCE AGENTS.

THE 21-8 VOTE TO SEND IT TO THE FULL HOUSE FOR ACTION FOLLOWED REJECTION OF AMENDMENTS AIMED AT WEAKENING PROVISIONS WHICH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS SAID WOULD IMPOSE UNCONSTITUTIONAL RESTRICTIONS ON JOURNALISTS.

SUPPORTERS OF THE MEASURE SAID THE AMENDMENTS WOULD HAVE MADE THE BILL WORTHLESS.

THE BILL IS AIMED LARGELY AT SUPPRESSING SUCH PUBLICATIONS AS THE COVERT ACTION INFORMATION BULLETIN, AN ANTI-CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (CIA) JOURNAL PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES WHICH REGULARLY DISCLOSES THE NAMES OF CIA OFFICERS ABROAD.

IT WAS GIVEN IMPETUS BY A JULY 4 MACHINE-GUN ATTACK ON THE HOME OF A CIA STATION CHIEF IN JAMAICA AFTER HIS NAME HAD BEEN DISCLOSED BY A COVERT ACTION EDITOR.

TODAY'S VOTE REFLECTED WIDESPREAD FEAR IN CONGRESS THAT THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY HAD BEEN WEAKENED BY RESTRICTIONS AND ATTACKS ON IT AND NEEDED PROTECTION TO DO ITS JOB.

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